

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 880-2-883-7150-4

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. GOVERNMENT-FUNDED CYCLONE SHELTER CONSTRUCTION PROJECT CONTINUES

DHAKA, MARCH 9 -- Groundbreaking begins this week for nine new United States Government-funded Multi-Purpose Cyclone Shelters in Cyclone Sidr-affected Khulna division. Groundbreaking sites include Kholishakhali, Sultapur, Nona Donga, Mohishcharoni, Betkhashi, Shakhariatoro Shohid Sreeti, Paschim Mollikerbar, Sreefaltala Dohkin Para, and Bikotmari Primary Schools in Bagerhat district.

These nine sites are part of a U.S. Government – funded project to build 24 multi-purpose cyclone shelters through the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM). The multi-purpose schools will be used daily as schools when not needed for emergencies. The groundbreaking on these nine sites makes a total of 13 multi-purpose cyclone shelters under construction in Cyclone Sidr-affected areas of Khulna and Barisal. These humanitarian assistance projects are part of a 2008 agreement between the United States and Government of Bangladesh providing \$4.3 million in funds for the construction of multi-purpose cyclone shelters and bridges.

The United States Government is committed to assisting the Government of Bangladesh and its people. The message of the U.S. Government to the people of Bangladesh is a simple one: We were here before the cyclone; we were here during the initial emergency relief phase; and we are here to help Bangladesh move forward. The United States Government has provided more than \$5 billion in development assistance to Bangladesh since independence. Immediately after Cyclone Sidr, the United States Government provided \$30 million in emergency food assistance and \$6.5 million for non-food emergency relief activities through USAID. The United States also is providing \$75 million in cyclone assistance for emergency relief, rehabilitation, and sustainable development in poor and vulnerable Cyclone Sidr-affected areas (including villages and chars). This continuing assistance reflects the U.S. commitment to helping build a brighter tomorrow for Bangladesh's most vulnerable citizens.

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Note: A Bangla translation of this press release is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>